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Preparatory Committee for the
Fiftieth Anniversary of the
United Nations

REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Note by the Chairman

INTRODUCTION

1. On 8 December 1992 the General Assembly considered the report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations submitted to it on 3 December 1992 (A/47/49). In its decision 47/417 of 8 December 1992, the Assembly took note of the work of the Committee in 1992 and decided that the Preparatory Committee should continue its work and report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The Assembly was informed that it was anticipated that 12 meetings of the Preparatory Committee would be scheduled in New York during 1993.

2. Since that time, consultations within the Bureau of the Committee have taken place and, inter alia, have produced a proposed schedule of meetings for the Preparatory Committee for the first half of 1993 as follows:

Monday, 22 February

Friday, 12 March

Friday, 23 April

Thursday, 20 May

3. The Preparatory Committee will wish to consider whether or not this proposed schedule is acceptable.

4. On 3 February 1993, the Secretary-General wrote to all permanent representatives to the United Nations, drawing attention to the importance of the establishment of national committees for the fiftieth anniversary to

provide "a focal point or channel for the whole range of each country's activities with regard to the anniversary". The Secretary-General asked to be apprised of the details of such national committees by 1 March 1993.

5. In the same note, the Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that funds would not be available from the regular budget for the financing of the activities of the Fiftieth Anniversary and noted the establishment of a Trust Fund for the Fiftieth Anniversary, to which he hoped Member States would be able to make contributions.

6. Consultations have indicated that there are a number of issues for decision by the Committee at an early stage because they are viewed as fundamental to the nature and shape of the fiftieth anniversary.

I. THEME

7. The point has been made widely that an early decision is required on the underlying theme of the fiftieth anniversary. The common focus of the suggestions made has been the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental concepts that it expresses. It has also been stressed that the theme should be forward-looking and widely relevant.

8. The Secretary-General has proposed "We the peoples" as a theme for the fiftieth anniversary. These words, with which the Preamble begins, set its inspiring tone; and that they already exist in all the official languages and are widely recognized as synonymous with the aims and goals of the United Nations is an additional major advantage.

9. The question of the underlying and unifying theme is one which needs to be decided as soon as possible and made public.

II. ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

10. Related to the question of an underlying theme is that of the principles to be applied in the organization of the fiftieth anniversary. Consultations have suggested, among others, the following:

(a) United Nations celebrations and actions in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary should, as far as possible, be universal in character in keeping with the universality of the membership of the United Nations;

(b) There should be a clear allocation of functions/activities between the United Nations system and Member States in order to ensure that inappropriate duplication is avoided and that the actions to be taken will, as a whole, be consistent and coherent;

(c) A suitable climax to the fiftieth anniversary needs to be identified. That climax or culminating point should have universal importance. The view has also been expressed that it should be enduring in

its effect and have a suitable symbolic value, given the historic importance of the fiftieth anniversary;

(d) United Nations actions and activities in connection with the anniversary should, to the extent possible, be conducted in and available in all the official languages.

11. It has been suggested that the Preparatory Committee consider the applicable principles at an early stage so that agreement on them may be reached and they may then become part of the development of the programme of work and activities for the anniversary and that the relevant decisions may be taken and implemented.

III. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ACTIVITIES

12. It has been specifically proposed that the Preparatory Committee might wish to recommend that heads of State or Government participate in a commemorative session of the General Assembly to be held for a short period, culminating on 24 October 1995.

13. A revised version of the list of activities appears in annex I. This updates the information contained in document A/AC.240/1992/L.2.

14. The Committee may also wish to consider what activities in progress should be agreed to as being appropriate and consistent with the underlying theme and organizing principles of the fiftieth anniversary.

15. In this context, the Committee will wish to bear in mind that some activities, if they are to be approved, will need to be given approval quickly because of the lead-time involved in them. Postage stamps, medallions and coins, as well as films and books, are all examples of such activities.

16. Further, in this context, it is recalled that, following discussions with the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Universal Postal Union, the Executive Council of the Union, at its session in April and May 1992, adopted recommendations CE 2/1992, which reads as follows:

> "Recognizing that the Universal Postal Union, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, must make its contribution to the events that are to mark this anniversary,
>
> "Recommends that postal administrations make provision, in their 1995 issue programme, for a stamp to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations."

17. Given the undoubted importance of the occasion that the anniversary affords, the Committee will wish to consider the timing, nature, form and content of action to be taken by the General Assembly at its fiftieth regular session or in a commemorative session, or both, in 1995. It may also wish to

begin early consideration regarding any draft declaration or statement to be made on that occasion.

18. To assist in such considerations, annex II provides a provisional timetable of known United Nations commitments for 1995.

IV. ACTION BY MEMBER STATES

19. The Secretary-General has requested that the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary be a system-wide celebration and fully reflect the near universal representation of the United Nations, its diversity and its multifaceted nature. Member States and their National Committees will wish to consider actions to be taken by them for the fiftieth anniversary, either alone or in conjunction with the United Nations and/or relevant regional organizations.

20. The point has been taken that decisions by Member States on such actions will rely in part on early knowledge of decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee on the theme and activities of the United Nations for the anniversary.

V. ACTION BY THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

21. The Committee will note that the Secretary-General attaches great significance to the system-wide dimension of the anniversary. Although collaboration between the United Nations and United Nations organizations is being discussed within the system, Member States may wish to request formally that the various organizations cooperate fully with the United Nations on this important occasion.

VI. ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

22. A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed the wish to be involved in the anniversary. Some have also asked to be able to observe or take part in the preparatory process.

23. The Committee needs to decide on the role it believes NGOs should be enabled to play and, as appropriate, the rules relating to their participation in preparatory and other official meetings of the United Nations on the anniversary.

VII. LOCALES

24. In addition to the main United Nations centres at which the anniversary will be celebrated, including New York, Geneva, Vienna, Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Nairobi and Santiago, it is certainly expected that the capitals and other major cities of Member States will wish to mark the occasion.

25. Given the fact that the Charter was signed in San Francisco, it is expected that there will be a special ceremony there marking the fiftieth anniversary of that event. The city of San Francisco has already established a Fiftieth Anniversary Committee.

26. It is hoped that Member States will celebrate the event during the fiftieth anniversary year recalling not only 26 June 1945, when the Charter was signed, and United Nations Day, but also days of special national significance, for example, anniversaries of admission to the United Nations.

VIII. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

27. Since the financial situation of the Organization is expected to preclude making available additional regular budget resources for the financing of commemorative programmes and activities, the Secretary-General has established a Trust Fund for the Fiftieth Anniversary. As stated above, on 3 February 1993, a note verbale was sent to Governments by the Secretary-General urging them to support this initiative.

28. Furthermore, a Foundation for the Fiftieth Anniversary has been created to permit corporations, foundations and individuals to contribute indirectly to the celebration and benefit from tax deductions in those countries where they apply.

29. While projects and activities are expected to be funded from extrabudgetary resources, it will be essential to the effective functioning and proper management of the fiftieth anniversary that the fiftieth anniversary secretariat, already established, be assured of adequate staff and related resources. The Committee may wish to communicate its view on this point.

Annex I

ACTIVITIES IN PROGRESS

1. A pictorial history of the United Nations with photographs capturing various events in the life of the Organization and its specially significant role in the developing countries. The photographs will possibly be included in an exhibit to be sponsored by the International Photographic Council.

2. A book of illustrations of art treasures of the United Nations, tentatively entitled "They Came Bearing Gifts". The publication will feature photographs of art work currently housed in United Nations offices around the world and in the Archives.

3. A full-length feature film for young people, "Rocking the Global Village", featuring young musicians from around the world who compose and perform pieces that present various United Nations issues. The film release will be accompanied by a music video, educational book and global promotional tour.

4. A United Nations-related film series to be initiated in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in July-August of 1995 before travelling around the world. It will highlight both United Nations documentaries as well as the presentation of United Nations issues in other films.

5. Donation to the United Nations of a set of privately owned signature pages of the Charter. The pages, which were discovered by chance, will be presented to the United Nations during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Charter's signing in 1995.

6. A series of television vignettes capturing significant or dramatic moments in the history of the United Nations, highlighting, in particular, United Nations achievements in the developing countries. The vignettes would be broadcast world wide each day in the year leading up to the anniversary, using entertainers and prominent world leaders as hosts.

7. A photo-essay book entitled "Fifty UN Success Stories", comprising a collection of images taken by renowned photographers, showing activities in the field from agriculture to urban development, with special emphasis on children.

8. A children's book about the United Nations featuring the "Muppets".

9. An internationally televised programme exploring critical issues on the agenda of the United Nations. Various segments would be filmed simultaneously in as many as 30 international locations on 24 October 1994. The "global snapshot" would be distributed internationally for world-wide viewing on 24 October 1995 with a potential audience of over 1 billion people. This has been proposed by a consortium of public service broadcasters.

10. Revitalization and renovation of certain public areas at Headquarters such as the tour route and the visitors' retail concourse. The result would be a facility that not only better serves the public visiting United Nations Headquarters, but also provides a more appropriate image of the Organization.

11. A children's tour at Headquarters designed to address the physical, psychological and educational needs of young visitors to the United Nations. The tour should instil a sense of unity among children of various nationalities, cultures, religions and ways of life, and will be "low-tech", low-maintenance and interactive.

12. A publishing venture aimed at developing educational materials about the United Nations and youth around the world in cooperation with educational institutions and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The aim is to develop a modular system of publications and educational support materials designed to be adapted by each participating country.

13. Performances in major cities by leading orchestras in honour of the fiftieth anniversary, with the possibility of live television broadcasts.

14. Collaborative projects in the visual arts which would bring together a selection of culturally diverse artists, artist cooperatives, cultural institutions and perhaps handicraft industries from many nations and the presentation of the results in a series of exhibitions in different regions of the world.

* * *

In addition to the above proposals, which are expected to be self-funded, a number of other proposals have been received for which funds are not yet available. In order to ensure full global participation in the commemoration, it is hoped that National Committees will initiate and arrange funding for a wide range of projects to further the goals of the anniversary.

Annex II

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE OF SPECIAL CONFERENCES, 1995

January/February

World Summit for Social Development

Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

June

San Francisco

Week of 26 June: Celebrations in connection with the signing of the Charter of the United Nations.

September

World Conference of Women: Beijing, 4-15 September

October

New York

24 October: Ceremonies to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will also be held in 1995, the dates and venue of which have yet to be determined.